

ABC NIGHTLINE

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DUNSMORE: The summer headlines make it seem like a storm is brewing. Libya threatens to attack the U.S. carrier Eisenhower, even as Col. Khadfy bombs neighboring Chad. The Soviets accuse the U.S. of armed provocation against Libya. A massive American flotilla is on maneuvers in Central America. Five thousand U.S. ground troops exercising in Honduras. A U.S. destroyer hails down a Russian freighter off Nicaragua, demanding to know its identity, cargo and destination. Radio Moscow denounces the U.S. for world adventurism and gunboat diplomacy. President Reagan says the U.S. is trying to stop the communization of Central America. Tass says the U.S. is playing with fire. Are the U.S. and the Soviet Union on a collision course? The Libyan threat to sink the carrier Eisenhower, while it has to be guarded against, is not considered probable. The carrier is still avoiding entering the disputed waters, and the nearby war in Chad is tribal, not over ideology. The number of ships and planes in the Central American maneuvers is extraordinary. Military planners concede that there are some dangers. However, neither Admiral Zumwalt, former chief of naval operations, who supports the maneuvers nor Admiral Stansfield Turner, former CIA chief, who doesn't, believe there are substantial risks of accidental warfare. The hailing of a Soviet freighter on the high seas was unusual. But it complies with acceptable international standards. It in no way compares with the quarantine imposed by the U.S. in 1962, when it threatened to turn back, with force, if necessary, any ship loaded with strategic cargo for Cuba. Despite the strong rhetoric from Moscow's various propaganda organs, there is promise only of political support, no threats to take any specific actions. As the analysts note, when the Soviets praise the heroic struggle of the Sandinista revolution, the use of the word heroic usually means they're on their own. Tangible Soviet military support for Cuba and Nicaragua does, of course, continue. Military equipment is pouring at record levels, but even so, there are continuing private talks between Moscow and Washington to keep things from getting out of hand. As a result, intelligence analysts note no high-performance MIG jets have been sent to Nicaragua and no threatening Soviet missiles for Central America have been promised or are anywhere in sight. Some Soviet officials compare their support for radical regimes in Central America to American support for the

resistance against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The U.S., of course, rejects that analogy. But to a certain extent, the acceptance of spheres of influence remains one aspect of each super power's policies. The analysts here believe the U.S. is not likely to go to war over anything the Soviets do in eastern Europe, nor are the Russians likely to start a war in America's backyard. This is Barrie Dunsmore for Nightline at the State Department.